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# KAYAK

## 57



\$100

B. R. T. R. A. D. E. N.





Sorry, but the editors of *kayak* feel that  
your submission is not quite what we need  
this season. Thanks anyway.

*George H. Hitchcock*

## Unsinkable Genius: George Hitchcock's KAYAK

BY JOSEPH BEDNARIK

Talk to a bibliophile long enough and you will discover their “Magical Library” story. Mine goes like this: In my early twenties I made a habit of wandering the stacks at the University of Oregon library. One day an eight-volume set with “KAYAK” printed in all-caps on the spines caught my eye.

I pulled a random volume from the shelf, and after puzzling over the typography and graphics, joyfully dove into the literary brainchild of George Hitchcock.

What I discovered, like thousands before me, was the treasure-trove of a literary magazine called *kayak*—bursting with surrealist poetry, energized collages, odd illustrations, lively correspondence, opinionated reviews, and “ribald” articles.

These magazines looked and felt *authentic*, which was *exactly* what I was looking for. The individual issues were printed on less-than-precious paper stock, and within any given issue the colors of the pages flickered from white to light green to yellow to orange. In issue nineteen there was even an announcement, printed in bright red, at the top of the contents page:

NOTICE: The major portion of this issue of *kayak* has been printed on rifle and small-arms target paper rejected as substandard by the U.S. Defense Department.



It did not take long to realize that *Kayak* was one of the most gorgeous, distinctive, and passionate magazines and presses the American literary world has ever seen, and each volume radiated a do-it-yourself feel.

I wasn't a student and thus no library card, so I made frequent visits to the bound *kayak* magazines. Eventually I couldn't take it anymore and needed to acquire a complete run of the magazine for my personal library. All sixty-four issues. The quest took a decade.

During those ten years, whenever I got my hands on an issue of *kayak*, I held a real-world example of the modern small-press revolution. Hitchcock started his own magazine in 1964 after a stint as an associate editor at the *San Francisco Review*. At SFR he witnessed just how much money could be spent on publishing a literary journal.

He vowed to do things differently, and while he was willing to support the enterprise with sweat equity—from editorial tasks and printing to hosting collating parties with poets—he refused to financially underwrite the endeavor.

The major expense, as he learned at *San Francisco Review*, was printer's bills. To minimize that expense, he bought an old press, took it apart piece by piece so he could understand the mechanics of the machine, and after rebuilding it, learned to print. As he told an interviewer in 1972:

The one thing that's essential to the successful publication of a literary magazine is knowing the craft of the actual production. So I taught myself to be a printer and I've along the way acquired a number of presses so that I can print the magazine myself. (*Anython III*)

Please note that Hitchcock does not say *fine* printer. His goal was to produce and distribute a magazine that served its primary goal: delight subscribers on a regular basis throughout the year.

And poets took notice.

The list of poets that Hitchcock discovered, helped, and advanced is the best evidence that something special was happening in the pages of *kayak*: early Margaret Atwood, rising Mark Strand, and unknown Raymond Carver, to cite three prominent examples.

In 1968, the National Council on the Arts, a precursor of the National Endowment for the Arts, awarded *Kayak* a grant of \$10,000 in recognition of its contribution to "advancing the cause of the unknown, obscure or difficult writer, and in the publication of books visually and typographically distinctive, thereby helping to advance the cause of the best in American art."

In an era when accepting government money was controversial, Hitchcock announced in issue fourteen that "the award was unsolicited and made with no editorial conditions." He cashed the check and went on to tell readers that *kayak* would expand book publishing activities, pay writers, buy needed equipment, and "underwrite occasional special projects."



The first “special project” was a \$400 cash prize for the best poem in English on the subject of “The Life or Death of Che Guevara.” Judging the award was John Haines, a *kayak* regular, W.S. Merwin, and Thomas McGrath, a writer who had been blacklisted during the McCarthy era.

No editorial conditions, indeed!

Like the magazines, each *Kayak* book was illustrated with prints, drawings, or collages. As Philip Levine recalled in his generous introduction to *One-Man Boat: The George Hitchcock Reader*:

George asked me if I'd like to do a book for *Kayak* press... He warned me that it would be illustrated and that I would have no say in the matter as well as no say in the choice of the cover or any aspect of the design. He wouldn't fool with the poems and I wouldn't fool with the production of the book, which was fine.

While there is no official bibliography of *Kayak* press, to date I have discovered evidence of seventy-nine titles, thanks to the *Kayak* archives at the Poetry/Rare Books Collection at University of Buffalo, New York, and the George Hitchcock archive at University of California, Santa Cruz.

The *Kayak* library of books includes a portfolio of prints by artist Jean Varda, the first two books by Charles Simic, the second book by Ray Carver, and a classic anthology of found poems with faux academic responses, *Pioneers of Modern Poetry*. The print runs of the chapbooks numbered 400 to 800 in the early days, then expanded to 1,000 to 1,200 as *Kayak*'s reputation and distribution grew. Many of the books went into multiple printings.

One of the challenges for any and all *Kayak* bibliographers will be the daunting task of tracking variant points within editions, as well as physical changes from edition to edition. I for one abandoned the *Kayak* bibliography dream, and became content by carrying a simple checklist in my wallet. And I laugh out loud whenever I find yet *another* variant, as I did as recently as late as April 2017, when I discovered that there are two different covers for *Pioneers of Modern Poetry*. Or, more accurately, *at least* two different covers.

And then, of course, there were Hitchcock's famous rejection slips. Images of a boy being attacked by wolves or a hiker falling down an ice crevice with a note, such as “the editor of *kayak* regrets that your submission, although worthy, didn't quite make it.”

Over the twenty-year run of the magazine (1964–1984), George sent tens of thousands of these rejections out into the world. “It was good for a laugh,” Hitchcock recalled in an unpublished interview, “although some people were terribly insulted. But the ones who were terribly insulted you wouldn't want in the magazine anyway.”

Hitchcock died in 2010 at the age of ninety-six. His obituaries in the *Times*—both Los Angeles and New York—are worth finding online, as they point out that George was so much more than the editor of *kayak*: playwright, painter, stone-carver, sports



editor for a Communist newspaper, union organizer, merchant marine, actor, teacher. His was a life lived deeply *and* broadly.

And the good news is that the Hitchcock legend is still alive and well. In 2011, the Multnomah County Library in Portland, Oregon, mounted a show entitled "Unsinkable Genius: The Surreal Voyage of George Hitchcock and *kayak* Magazine," and in 2015, Tavern Books issued *The Wounded Alphabet: Collected Poems*.

Finally, within the ever-growing e-bombardment we moderns must live within, do yourself a favor and find an issue of *kayak* magazine or a *Kayak* press chapbook. Locate yourself in a quiet place away from your smartphone and marvel at the artifact. Marvel and know that what you hold was printed by a man named George Hitchcock, in a basement in San Francisco or Santa Cruz. It was assembled by fellow poets at a good-natured collating party, then sent out into the world to be read with pleasure by readers who anticipated its arrival.

"I am with Morris and Blake in prizing the written word that you have designed and made with your own hands over and above the product of alienated labor," Hitchcock wrote in *TriQuarterly* 43.

"In a factory-ridden world, the little magazine can be one of the rare creations in which thought and labor meet without the intercession of the impersonal processes usual in our society. As for *kayak*... it is in its design and production—always with the freely given help of a sodality or brotherhood of poets—that the joy of the thing lies."

Joy for all of us to this day.

☛ JOSEPH BEDNARIK is the co-publisher at Copper Canyon Press. He is also the co-editor of *One-Man Boat: The George Hitchcock Reader* (Story Line, 2003).



The editor of *kayak* regrets that he cannot oblige you  
by publishing your obviously meritorious work--  
sincerely,

George H. Hitchcock



## 2017 Oscar Lewis Awards

On March 27, the Book Club of California presented the Oscar Lewis Awards to Robert Bringhurst for his contributions to Western History, and to Kitty Maryatt for her contributions to the Book Arts.

### ROBERT BRINGHURST: INTRODUCTION BY PETER KOCH

When I glance at the bookshelf immediately to the left of my writing desk, I see a small but highly prized collection of books by Robert Bringhurst and his wife, the Canadian poet, philosopher, and musician, Jan Zwicky. This collection comprises about fifty volumes, just under forty of which have Robert's name on them. There are volumes of essays and poems, a number of translations, and typographic books in at least three languages.

Several of my favorite titles are: *Everywhere Being is Dancing*, collected essays that Robert has subtitled *Twenty Pieces of Thinking*. *The Beauty of the Weapons*, a collection of early poems that includes *The Old in their Knowing*—a book that I had the pleasure to print and publish in a new edition just a few years ago—and *The Tree of Meaning*, a collection of talks on poetry and the practice of thinking. These three come to mind not only because of the evocative titles but because of their incredibly thoughtful contents. When I am immersed in any one of Robert's books, I feel as if I am enjoying a vigorous alpine climb high enough above tree-line to see all the way to Arkadia, that long ago home to the great god Pan. Much of the work of the poet in Robert is to uncover new homes for the old and un-housed gods. This could be the subject of a future essay on thinking above the trees, but tonight—as is fitting of the San Francisco "Oscars"—we are gathered (in the neighborhood of some of the world's most magnificent trees) to celebrate Robert's contributions as an art historian, linguist, and typographer.

When Robert delivered the inaugural Codex Foundation Symposium lecture entitled "Spiritual Geometry: The Book as a Work of Art," for the first five minutes the screen was illuminated with a simple photograph of two garden variety snails clinging to a flowerpot that had an archaic Greek geometrical design pressed into its rim. The paired geometries, those of the growth and form of the common garden snail and the faint detail on that pot of geraniums on his porch were of a piece with his theme of sacred geometry and art that reached from masterpieces of eleventh century Persian calligraphy to Herman Zapf's *Manuale Typographicum*. He went on to speak eloquently of Gothic Cathedrals and the peculiar construction of the Venetian Gondola—listening to Bringhurst can be an exhilarating experience.

Robert's collected essays on typographic history and practice have made his name a household word among book designers and printers on at least four continents. A few representative titles are as follows:



*The Elements of Typographic Style*

*A Short History of the Printed Word*

*The Solid Form Of Language: An Essay On Writing And Meaning*

*Palatino: The Natural History of a Typeface*

And a few representative books about books and design edited by Robert:

*The Scythe and the Rabbit: Simon de Colines and the Culture of the Book in Renaissance Paris*  
by Kay Amert

*Carving the Elements: A Companion to the Fragments of Parmenides*

*The Form of the Book: Essays on the Morality of Good Design* by Jan Tschichold

Our illustrious Oscar Awards committee, composed exclusively of top entertainment business professionals and several noted book designers unanimously voted that we should celebrate Robert's considerable contribution to the history of the book and printing.

## Reading with Your Ears

OSCAR LEWIS AWARD REMARKS BY ROBERT BRINGHURST

I remember visiting Kitty Maryatt at Scripps College about twenty years ago, seeing what wonderful things she was making and the wonderful way she worked with her students. It was a lesson in how central the book arts can be to a humanist education. But if you had told me then that I'd be here with Kitty now, toasting the ghost of Oscar Lewis, I would not have believed you.

I'll confess that Oscar is not quite my kind of writer, but he is my kind of character: a man who loved his town and loved the people who made it what it was. He also loved fine printing, and he loved the people who made *that* what it was and is. Kevin Starr describes him in the mid 1960s, when he was as old as I am now, as someone "given to bow ties and good tailoring ... a white-haired figure from another era, almost preternatural in his constant calm and good humor." I nearly went out and bought a bow tie for this evening, in his honor. But the truth is, though I am from another era too, it is a different era than Oscar's, with a different dress code. I also have a lover's quarrel with the English language that Oscar was somehow spared, so I've come here as myself, not as Oscar in disguise.

The main thing is, he led a charmed life in a charmed place in a charmed time, hanging out with some of the best (and some of the least up-tight) printers in the country, and writing down much of what he learned. He spent a lot of time in an atmosphere where people did fine work and made fine things for the sake of that



fineness, not for the sake of money or fame. I've learned a lot from Oscar, and I'm grateful to him as well as to you.

Books are not static containers; they're the working veins and arteries of culture. Most of what we know and most of what we think travels through books, which is why the history of the book so easily becomes the history of everything. I'm going to spend the next few minutes talking about one small aspect of the history of everything: the early history of the book in California. By early, I don't mean Francis Drake or Junípero Serra; I mean before the arrival of Europeans, and before the introduction of any European notion of the book. That phase of California history overlaps with the European colonization; it overlaps with Oscar Lewis; and it overlaps with you and me. But it also reaches back to a tradition that has no connection with Europe: a tradition in which books were never printed on anything but air.

When Europeans first visited this place, California was home to perhaps a million people forming thousands of bands and villages and speaking roughly eighty different languages.<sup>1</sup> In every one of those languages, there were books: oral books: mythologies, histories, autobiographies, told by skilled mythtellers and oral historians.

Eighty languages is a large number: more than twice the number of languages spoken today in the European Union, though the EU is ten times the size of California. And the native languages of California aren't just numerous; they are wonderfully diverse. Precolumbian California was, in fact, far and away the richest part of what is now the United States and Canada: richest in human population and richest by far in human languages. Before the Europeans arrived, there were far more people on the West Coast of North America than on the East Coast, because the West Coast was where people kept arriving, coming on foot and in small boats along the southern edge of the Bering Land Bridge. California is only two percent of the total area of the USA and Canada, but a third of all the indigenous languages spoken north of the Rio Grande were spoken here in California.

I say again that in every one of those languages there were books—but they were books you had to read with your ears instead of your eyes. They were stored in the minds of the storytellers, not resting on library shelves. They were not written down, and they were also not memorized or recited; they were recreated, like jazz tunes or ragas, every time a mythteller told a story. They could be short, or they could be long, but the big stories routinely lasted for hours or days.

The early missionaries showed a lot of interest in California languages. They wrote several dictionaries and grammars. But they wanted nothing to do with the literature. It was heathen. It was pagan. They had come here to eradicate it and replace it with a story of their own.

The Swiss linguist Albert Gatschet was the first to break this pattern, and he had to go to some trouble to do it. In the 1870s, Gatschet developed an interest in Klamath, a language spoken in northern California and southern Oregon. As a linguist, he was interested in documenting the major Klamath dialects. One of these is Modoc, which was spoken in California. But this was on the heels of the Modoc War. Most surviving



speakers of Modoc had been forcibly removed to the Quapaw region of what was then called Indian Territory and is now called Oklahoma. Those who had escaped deportation had fled to Oregon. So in the 1870s and 1880s, when Gatschet conducted the first serious documentation of a California language and its oral literature, he had to work outside of California.

What Gatschet did that others had not done is simply take dictation. He sat down with native storytellers and encouraged them to say what they chose to say, in their own way, in their own time, in their own language. Then he learned that language well enough to translate and annotate the texts he had transcribed. This quintessential project should have started more than three centuries earlier. It should have started in October 1542, when Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo met speakers of Helawaskuyu, or Island Chumash, on Santa Catalina Island. Instead, it was delayed until many indigenous California cultures had been pounded to smithereens.

All humans have language, and under natural conditions, every human language has a literature. But you can reduce an oral literature to crumbs by dislocating and demoralizing and persecuting its speakers, just as you can reduce a written literature to ash by burning the books.

In the twentieth century, other linguists—including Pliny Goddard, Edward Sapir, Roland Dixon, John Harrington, Samuel Barrett, Lucy Freeland, Jaime de Angulo, and Dorothy Demetracopoulou—followed in Gatschet's footsteps. Through their collaboration with native mythtellers, a number of oral books, and fragments of oral books, were converted into written books. Many were also printed. In that form, they are still available to read, in the original, if you're willing to learn the language, and sometimes in translation.

For example, in 1901, along the Trinity River, Pliny Goddard started working with speakers of Hupa. He transcribed some excellent stories told by a woman named Milakets and another woman he called Mrs. Molasses. Twenty-six years later, a far more skillful linguist, Edward Sapir, worked at length with a Hupa speaker named Sam Brown and another named Tahseench'e'. Hupa, as a result, now has the richest written literature of any native California language.

Goddard was a specialist in Athapaskan languages, so he did all his California work in the northwestern part of the state, where Athapaskan languages are spoken. Along the Smith River, just south of the Oregon line, he took dictation from Joe Hostler, a speaker of Tolowa. On the Round Valley Reservation, he worked with three displaced northwestern mythtellers we know only as Pete, Charlie, and Captain Jim. They were speakers of Wailaki. And on the Eel River, in 1906, he met one of the finest California mythtellers on record, a man who was known in Kato as Hlonái kwe Kiileich and in English as Bill Ray.

In 1907, west of Mt. Lassen, Sapir worked with two speakers of Yana, a Hokan language. One was a man named Bathwii, the other a woman named Ts'iidaimiya. A few years later he worked with another Yana speaker: Ishi, the most famous of all California Indians.



Around 1909, along the upper Klamath River, Roland Dixon took dictation from *Ítoxómo*, *Árariyaho*, and others who spoke Shasta, another Hokan language. Then in 1912, not far from Mt. Lassen, he met a great narrative artist whose name was Hants'ibuyim. The fruit of that encounter is one of the great works of California literature, spoken and transcribed in a Penutian language called Maidu. Half a century later, it was meticulously edited by a linguist named William Shipley and another Maidu speaker known as Maym Hannah Gallagher, but it has still never been adequately published.

In central California in 1913 and 1914, Edward Gifford used an early acoustic recording machine to capture the voice and the stories of a storyteller named Tom Williams, who spoke another Penutian language, Sierra Miwok. Twenty years later, Lucy Freeland took dictation from the same man in the same language.

In 1918, along the Russian River, Paul Radin took dictation from Jim Tripo and Jim McCloud in Wappo, a Yukian language. Farther south, close to Palomar Mountain, in 1919 and 1920, Paul-Henri Faye took dictation from Joe Brittain in Cupeño, an Utaztecan language.

In the 1920s, along the lower Klamath River, John Peabody Harrington took dictation in the Hokan language Karuk from a woman named Imkyánvaan and another named Maakich. Harrington was fanatically possessive of his sources and wanted no one else to talk to them, but Jaime de Angulo & Lucy Freeland also worked with Maakich in 1927. On the other side of Mt. Lassen, they also transcribed some fine stories told by Henry Wohl in another Hokan language, Achumawi.

In 1929 and 1930, along the upper Trinity River, Dorothy Demetracopoulou took dictation in the Penutian language Wintu, from Jenny Curl, Jo Bender, and Grace McKibben.

Relatively speaking, those were the golden years of literary transcription in California. Much had already been lost, but with the Depression and the Second World War, native people found it even harder to hang on to their languages and cultural traditions. Even where the languages survived, the literary traditions were often broken.

In each of the languages I've mentioned—and I could mention a dozen more—part of the old oral library was successfully converted to written form. The original transcriptions are sometimes poor, but they are also sometimes superb. Some of those that are poor have been carefully redone; others still need redoing; but in each case there is something: the record of a voice that is native to the place, and a genuine fragment native California literature.

On the other hand, there are languages like Cuyama: a Chumashan language once spoken over a large area north of the San Rafael Mountains. Cuyama is one of a number of California languages in which we have words but no texts. What speakers of Cuyama had to say, to each other and to us, is forever lost. Yet many of the finest cave paintings and pictographs known from aboriginal America were found in Cuyama territory. I say were rather than are, because most of those pictographs



and paintings have been destroyed—deliberately destroyed by colonists and intruders—and the only way to see them now is in photographs or facsimiles. There is not much doubt that the Cuyama had a rich oral literature to go with their rich tradition of visual art, but it is a literature no one will ever be able to read. Those who might have helped to save it preferred to destroy it instead.

In the early 1870s, when Hubert Howe Bancroft wanted to write a survey of the cultures of precolonial California, he assigned the task to his best ghost writer, Walter Mulrea Fisher. Fisher did what he could, but at that date the scholars were not much help. In the early 1870s, there were no transcriptions of native California literature. There were some loose paraphrases—English and Spanish imitations and forgeries—but no genuine texts or translations. Fisher wrote 500 pages on the mythology of California, Mexico, and the Pacific States, but he had nothing of substance to work with and nothing of substance to say.<sup>2</sup> Years later, Bancroft himself wrote:

California has no rich aboriginal sources from which to gather inspiration and prestige for her literature; nothing beyond some puerile hieroglyphics on rock walls, and a few vague myths concerning faded tribes and geographic points of interest, half intimated in the musical names transmitted to us.<sup>3</sup>

This is dead wrong—but Bancroft had no easy way of knowing it was wrong, and he had plenty of encouragement to think the worst. Franklin Tuthill, whose *History of California* Bancroft had published and heartily endorsed in 1866, saw things this way:

When explorers come upon a new land, if they find it heavily timbered, or the intervals rank with wild grass, they know that cultivation will make it yield richly of grains and fruit; but if it bear no trees, or only scraggy and stunted ones, and a thin, scant herbage on the open country, they condemn it as unfit for farming purposes. Californians have the best of reasons for hoping that the aborigines of a land do not indicate, by the degree of their nobleness or degradation, the style of men that will be produced under civilized auspices upon the same soil; for, of all wretchedly debased and utterly brutal beings, the Indians of California were the farthest fallen below the average Indian type. They were neither brave nor bold, generous nor spirited. They seem to have possessed none of the noble characteristics that, with a slight coloring of romance, make heroes of the red men of the Atlantic slopes, and win for them our ready sympathy. We hear of no orators among them, no bold braves terribly resenting and contesting to the last the usurpation of the whites....<sup>4</sup>



There would be no point now in quoting such baseless nonsense, except that these views have yet to disappear. Tuthill is wrong, just as Bancroft is wrong, but after 150 years of learning otherwise, his errors are still with us.

There was a time—starting in 1903, and lasting until roughly 1960—when the University of California Press paid serious attention to Native California literatures. Over those six decades, the University Press published many indigenous texts and translations, and published them well. For the past half century, however, that interest has not been visible. If you compare, for example, Pliny Goddard's *Hupa Texts*, published by UC Press in 1904, or his *Kato Texts*, published in 1908, with the abominable edition of Lucy Freeland's *Central Sierra Miwok Texts* published by the same university's Survey of California and Other Indian Languages in 1982, you will see what I mean. Scholarship has continued, but the mechanism for honoring and sharing that scholarship has failed. Malcolm Margolin at Heyday Books and a few other individuals have carried the torch as best they could, but texts in native California languages never were and never will be best-selling trade books. Trade publishing is a fine invention, but there are things it cannot do. And in our time, academic publishing suffers most of the constraints of trade publishing along with some extra constraints of its own.

I have felt for a long time that the Book Club of California should take a greater interest in native Californian literatures, and should sponsor new translations, and should publish those translations *along with the original texts*, in a form that would make them pleasant for Book Club members and others to read. I think we owe these oral traditions undying respect, and should show that respect in the way we still can.

#### NOTES

1 An excellent general reference on the subject is Victor Golla, *California Indian Languages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).

2 See H. H. Bancroft, *The Native Races of the Pacific States of North America*, vol. 3: *Myths and Languages* (New York: Appleton, 1875).

3 Bancroft, "Early California Literature," *Works*, vol. 38 (San Francisco: The History Company, 1890): 651

4 Franklin Tuthill, *History of California* (San Francisco: H. H. Bancroft, 1866): 88.



## KITTY MARYATT: INTRODUCTION BY THOMAS SCHWARTZBURG

I have known Kitty for a long time. My contact with her was mostly at Scripps College in Claremont, where I attended several of the lectures she arranged each year. I recently purchased *Sixty Over Thirty: 1986–2016*, a catalog of the work she did at the Scripps College Press. Working with a fresh crop of students each semester throughout her thirty-year career at the press, she produced sixty fine editions of the catalog, which devotes four pages to each of the sixty books. It is quite a work in itself. Each book was made from scratch, developed from students' own ideas and beautifully executed in fifteen weeks.

I had the pleasure of visiting her studio, which is in a four-story townhouse in Playa Vista, the subdivided property that used to be Howard Hughes airport and aircraft production facility. The studio is elegant and full of art and books, but mostly full of tools, supplies, and the immense resources she needs to do what she does at Two Hands Press.

Recently I have been working with her to arrange funding to reproduce *La Prose du Transsibérien*, a project typical of Kitty. It involved years of technical research and is now ready to be reproduced in the same fashion that Blaise Cendrars and Sonia Delaunay used in 1913 to create the original. It will be a fabulous work of art when it is done.

## A Woman of Letters

## OSCAR LEWIS AWARD REMARKS BY KITTY MARYATT

I am so pleased to be honored by the Book Club of California. I'd like to thank Anne Smith and Randy Tarpey-Schwed for shepherding the club, and to thank the awards committee headed by Marie Dern, to thank Peter Koch for managing the excellent *Quarterly* publications, and to thank all of the officers and directors who run the Book Club.

Oscar Lewis mentions in his memoirs how vital it was for the club to support printers in the early days, and of course we're very happy that it continues to do so. You know how it takes a village to raise a child: I am glad to have been raised here in this village. There are three lessons that I have learned in this exciting life that I have lived:

All things are connected.

The key to success is persistence.

Everything you have ever learned ends up being useful for bookmaking.

Just like Robert Bringhurst, I take the humanistic broad view. I was trained to do this in my undergraduate years at Scripps College where we had three years of required humanities classes. Chief Seattle, from my hometown of Seattle, tells us that



all things are connected: "Whatever befalls the earth befalls all the sons of the earth." James Burke, in the remarkable television series *Connections*, showed how the printing press was not discovered in a vacuum: paper had to make its way into Italy where Gutenberg bought his paper. The Jacquard loom had to be invented using punch cards to enable the next step in the invention of the computer. Burke discussed the mathematical concept of the "music of the spheres" for the orbital motion of planets. I keep this idea of connective tissue in the forefront of all my teaching.

I grew up in South Pasadena. I was fortunate to follow in the footsteps of Ward Ritchie and Lawrence Clark Powell, attending Marengo Elementary, South Pasadena Junior High, and South Pasadena High School. I remember the fun of learning handwriting, trying to write beautifully and even experimentally. I read a million books, sobbing at the end of *Marjorie Morningstar*, and listened to Anna Moffo exquisitely singing "The Merry Widow." I played piano duets with my brother at the Hotel Green in Pasadena, sang in the choir at Oneonta Congregational Church, and performed in high school musicals. I remember playing and singing and laughing with my four lively brothers and sisters. That was South Pasadena.

My ninth grade math teacher suggested I should be a math teacher. She must have observed me helping my fellow student Lily, who was confused in algebra. Later my high school crusty crabby skinny math teacher, Miss Steele, who everybody loved, was my role model. I wanted to be loved like her.

In ninth grade homeroom, every student at South Pasadena Junior High had to write their autobiography (at age fourteen, mind you). We each made our own book by tearing parent-size sheets of paper to size, drawing lines, handwriting the text (mine with a dip pen in turquoise blue), making illustrations, folding and collating the paper, sewing the signatures over muslin tapes, and binding the book with a vinyl spine and wallpaper sides. Ever the overachiever, I made two volumes.

I went to Scripps College in 1962, majoring in math and minoring in French and art. The most vivid memory I have is the first day of freshman humanities, in a room with one hundred other freshman, where the professor started his lecture in Greek, reciting the *Iliad*. For an hour.

It has dawned on me that I've spent nearly half my life at Scripps: four years as an undergraduate, plus four more summers at Claremont Graduate School earning my master's in math. Here's the title of my master's thesis: "The Positive and Negative Eigenvalues of the Perron-Frobenius Theorem." I spent thirty years as assistant professor of art and director of the Scripps College Press. It seems like another quarter of my life has been spent driving there.

I loved teaching at Scripps, where I made collaborative letterpress books with the students. There is no end to subjects that you can investigate with students. We researched women architects in order to focus on the architectonic nature of books. We looked at nineteenth-century weaving and the Jacquard loom; I wanted them to discover punch cards and the connection to computers. We looked at the complexity of privacy issues on the internet. We searched for all the women letterpress printers



in Los Angeles and wrote about them. We made sixty editions together. You can read about them in the bibliography I wrote last year called *Sixty Over Thirty*, available at Oak Knoll Books. I also produced a forty-minute documentary about making books at the Scripps College Press called *Thinking Out Loud*, which you can see on YouTube.

Before going back to Scripps in 1986 as a professor, I taught math for twelve years at Santa Monica High School. Math is so basic and essential: It is the language used to describe the functioning of the world. I brought in as much art and music into the classroom as I could. I loved being at Samohi.

I went to graduate school again, at UCLA, in 1980 when I realized that I would never get any better at calligraphy, binding, and printing unless I studied full time. In 1981, I received a grant to study fine binding at the Centro del Bel Libro in Ascona, Switzerland with Hugo Peller. I received my MFA in graphic design in 1983, with a concentration in book arts. I had already established my own Two Hands Press in 1974, where clients brought me calligraphy, printing, and binding jobs. Those funds helped put me through graduate school after I quit my job in 1980. At the same time, I taught many calligraphy classes at UCLA Extension, and later taught bookbinding and book structures there.

My love of letterforms is really what led me to study bookbinding, printing, and finally integrating all these skills into making the whole book. I've always been thirsty for knowledge.

I've been greatly influenced by so many of the teachers I've worked with.

I finally had time to take my first calligraphy class at UCLA Extension with Maury Nemoy right after I finished my first master's degree in 1971. He showed me how long it would take to develop professional hand skills in calligraphy. In 1974, I learned the glory of gold illumination with Donald Jackson, the Queen's scribe. I studied with David Howells in England in 1974. I wanted to know the secret of his inventiveness and distinctive calligraphic personality. Francis Butler, who came to the Woman's Building for a week in 1980, showed me that I didn't yet know how to create an integrated book; that experience inspired several of us in her class to form our Women of Letters group to talk deeply about letterpress. We're still meeting every couple of months. In graduate school at UCLA, John Neuhart sent me to work at the University of California Press to design books. Bernard Kester taught me how to talk about art. I took my first formal class in letterpress in 1980 with Andy Horn after stumbling around since 1976 teaching myself. I studied with fine binder Hugo Peller, where I learned to understand puns in German, and saw the advantage of big, strong hands for bookbinding. Daniel Kelm has inspired me with his inventive, precise structures.

I've been influenced by my students, especially in how to organize and complete complex projects with them, and finding that delicate balance between their need to do their own thing and learning to collaborate.



My engineer husband Gary taught me (noting my tendency towards complexity) the benefits of KISS, “keep it simple, stupid;” and “whoever has the tool in his hand is the boss.” We’ve been married thirty-two years.

My literary son Jason showed me how to develop characters for creative writing and how to write more poetically, while developing his own generous and loving character.

I’ve been particularly influenced by travel, seeing the European monuments we studied at Scripps so extensively. In Japan, the kindness and generosity of my former Scripps student, Miki Matsuda, was overwhelming. She helped me to experience the Japanese skills of *katagami* (Japanese stencils for kimono) and *kumihimo* (silk braiding techniques). She took me to kimono dyeing companies and to historic sites in Miyama. My Japanese calligraphy teacher Yoko Nishina took me to a remarkable exhibit of Silk Road scripts in Kyoto. She introduced me to her scroll-maker who allowed me to take at least five hundred photographs for three days while he mounted my son Jason’s calligraphy on a scroll. Yoko found a *katagami* festival in Ise and drove me there. I have never experienced such selfless generosity with their time, taking me to see everything I wanted to see in Kyoto for two whole months.

I retired last June and happily started traveling with my husband. Once home again, I started working on a new project, to re-create the 1913 *La Prose du Transsibérien* as an homage to artist Sonia Delaunay and poet Blaise Cendrars. The book is over six feet long and folds into a quarto-sized vellum case. There are four hundred and forty-five lines of avant-garde poetry set in thirty-eight different type-faces. The pochoir requires at least ninety stencils in twenty-one colors. My mission is to revive pochoir and spread the original techniques of using metal plates for the stencils. I want to reveal the unusual brushy watercolor techniques that Sonia must have required the *pocheurs* to do for her edition. You can read my new blog about this project at [laprosepochoir.blogspot.com](http://laprosepochoir.blogspot.com).

So many people have helped me move this project forward: Marcia Reed at the Getty Research Institute, Timothy Young at Yale University, Steve Woodall and Debbie Evans at the Palace of the Legion of Honor, Jean-Marc Chatelain at the Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris, Yves Peyré at the Jacques Doucet Library, Nathalie Couderc and Christine Menguy with pochoir at Ateleir Coloris, the type research from Stephen Coles and Michael Caine in Paris, my assistant Chris Yuengling-Niles with help in making keepsakes and with pochoir tests, Toby Schwartzburg for advising, and his daughter Molly Schwartzburg for moderating my blog.

All these activities I’ve talked about make me happy: I get to meet people equally crazy about what I am interested in and to be fully engaged intellectually. I really need to live to one hundred. Maybe one hundred and five is the right number.



## Southern California Sightings

CAROLEE CAMPBELL

Earlier this year I was eagerly awaiting the opening of an exhibition of books that, as of this writing, is on display at the Craft & Folk Art Museum (CAFAM) in Los Angeles (January 29–May 7, 2017). This is a museum that has been located on “Museum Row” since its inception in 1975. It is near both the La Brea Tar Pits and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), two places I haunted as a kid growing up in LA.

This would be my first visit to the Craft & Folk Art Museum but not to the building itself. Now considered a Los Angeles historic structure, it was built in 1930 in a quasi-French chateau style complete with mansard roof. The last time I was in the building it was to eat an omelette—one of fifty “ethnically inspired” omelettes on the menu of what was then a very popular café on the second floor of The Egg and the Eye, a gallery of contemporary arts and crafts. That was many years ago. In a stroke of irony, even longer ago when I was a teenager, I had a summer job sorting electronic parts in that selfsame building. The Craft & Folk Art folks have had the façade painted variously over the years in a patchwork blanket of primary “folk art” colors which makes the museum hard to miss.

Being a maker of books myself for nearly thirty-five years, you might imagine my eagerness to visit the aforementioned exhibition compellingly entitled *Chapters: Book Arts in Southern California* and billed as “the first large-scale museum survey of the importance of Southern California artists on the development of book arts.”

I was curious walking into the CAFAM galleries knowing that none of my books were to be included, until I learned that the exhibition was organized around four contextual themes: conceptual art; feminism; process and technology; and community and collaboration. My work might have fit into the theme of “process and technology” but after viewing the books on display I realized it would have been a stretch.

The exhibition featured over 100 artists’ books, from one-of-a-kind to mass editions including altered and sculptural books, and zines made in Southern California between the 1960s and the present day. Several of the featured artists are known more for their works in other disciplines; artists Ed Ruscha and Raymond Pettibone being but two examples. It nearly goes without saying that Ruscha’s *Every Building On the Sunset Strip* would be included in the show along with another one of Ruscha’s iconic “democratic multiples.” Both were featured fully unfurled and standing in their own acrylic display cases. There were just as many books on open shelves as there were in cases, with white gloves available for handling.

The exhibition focused on some of the region’s other key conceptual artists, including Wallace Berman and Barbara T. Smith who were early adopters and innovators of the form. Conceptual artist Eugenia P. Butler, another early pioneer of the form, spent over ten years collaborating with dozens of artists to create the *Book of Lies* (1991–2008), a three-volume work seen in the exhibition that explores each artist’s



subjective understanding of the notion of truth and lies. Truth and lies is a very interesting concept here in that the volumes are not books at all but three boxed portfolio sets of artwork. But I already knew that. I was one of the artists in the *Book of Lies, Volume Three*. (Okay. That means I was in the show after all.)

“Book art has been an (sic) significant practice for a number of well-known artists in Southern California and we wanted to explore this theme for a number of years,” says exhibitions curator Holly Jerger. “Focusing on the artist publications produced here in Southern California was an exciting opportunity for us to explore these established local artists, while also mining the rich production of artists and communities who have not been discussed in the larger narrative of this field and the arts establishment.”

Holly Jerger, who is on the CAFAM staff as senior curator of public engagement, is a mixed media artist herself with an emphasis on printmaking. According to her biography, she has been involved in arts education and public programming for fifteen years.

Prominent on display were works by artists that came out of the area’s institutional book arts programs: the Otis College of Art and Design, the Armory Center for the Arts, Scripps College Press, and the influential art and education center in LA known as The Woman’s Building (1973–1991) through its Feminist Studio Workshop and the Women’s Graphic Center. According to the CAFAM press release:

The exhibition presents a diverse range of techniques and approaches to the art form. Some pieces are intensely handmade, while others were produced using machines such as a Xerox or a risograph, a type of photocopier that produces an effect similar to color silk screening. Activists and artists have used book arts and self-publishing to build their community networks and advance political messages for relatively little expense. Artists like Elliot Pinkney, Joey Terrill, and Raymond Pettibon gave voice to their marginalized communities starting in the late 1970s. All three artists used low-cost, commercial printing processes to generate works that document the concerns of the African American, queer Chicano, and youth communities, respectively.

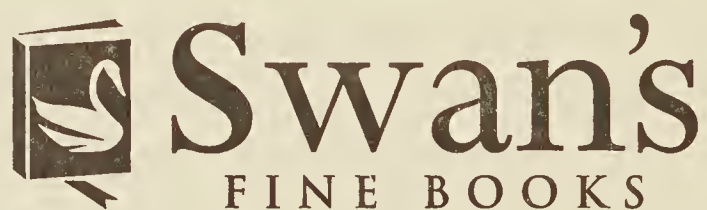
There was nearly as much wall art as books. Portfolios of artwork abounded. And there was sculpture. One work took the form of wooden poles suspended from the ceiling by hooks upon which were written, by hand, a portion of the text from James Joyce’s *Ulysses*. Book artist, Charlene Matthews, a bookbinder by trade, wrote the entire text on thirty-eight poles, taking two years to do it (only a selection was on display here).

Prominent in the center of the gallery space, and at the other end of the spectrum, was a work by Kitty Maryatt, former director of the Scripps College Press, proprietor of Two Hands Press, and winner of the Book Club’s 2017 Oscar Lewis Award for Book Arts. The work, entitled *Duchampian Gap*, literally arches between two pedestals,



mimicking a hunky version of the Gateway Arch in St. Louis. Although presented as a sculptural artwork, in fact it is a hand bound book; one that has all the characteristics that distinguish "bookness." The book is simply turned upside down with its spine inverted, creating the arch and allowing all 1240 leaves which are sewn in signatures onto alum-tawed goatskin thongs in an exposed binding style, to fan out. The foreedges and spine are painted bright red and the whole is bound into brown goatskin covers. This book sculpture, along with Charlene Matthews's poles, may be the quintessential example of the curiously worded statement within the press release—"some pieces are intensely handmade."

CAFAM is strong on hands-on workshops and family programs in conjunction with their exhibitions. Several workshops offered during the *Chapters* exhibition included a zine-making workshop, an introductory workshop on making one-of-a-kind artist's books, and a pop-up book workshop. The deeply varied *Chapters* exhibition included artists working at quite a variety of skill levels. As such, some of the works looked like they might have been created in a workshop such as one of these.



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## Bernard M. Rosenthal (1920–2017)<sup>1</sup>

IAN JACKSON

Bernard Rosenthal died in Oakland after a week's illness on January 14, 2017, at the age of ninety-six, leaving behind a last unfinished scholarly project, an edition and translation of the wartime correspondence of his grandfather Leo Olschki in Florence and the art historian Aby Warburg in Hamburg.<sup>2</sup> Rosenthal savored, as a rare and perfect thing, the epitaph that Warburg had composed for himself: *Amburghese di cuore, ebreo di sangue, d'anima Fiorentino* [By heart a native of Hamburg, Jewish by blood, in spirit a Florentine]. Rosenthal's inscription would have had to run:

A Bavarian-Tuscan by birth, Jewish by ancestry, by choice a Californian.

His Florentine mother compensated for their German birth by always speaking Italian to her children. All his life Rosenthal had enjoyed the company of his Italian cousins, and Italian was the language he reverted to on his deathbed. Like his other grandfather Jacques, the great Munich antiquarian dealer, Rosenthal wore his Jewishness lightly, although it was the key element that brought him to this country. As for California, it was a sort of American Italy. (Rosenthal would sometimes describe himself as "Toscamericano.") On a visit to Berkeley in 1947, his cousin Marcella Olschki described the town as "*quella valle d'Eden*" and could hardly bear to return to Florence after enjoying "*sua tanto godibile way of life*".<sup>3</sup> It was here that Rosenthal shed the H in Bernhard (at I-House at UC Berkeley) and soon became "Barney," the nickname by which he came to be universally known, even to strangers, and in formal settings. And California had been wittily introduced into another self-descriptive triad by an old family friend and fellow émigré to Berkeley, Ernst Kantorowicz, who liked to claim, with an ironic smile, that he belonged to "the three Master Races: the German, the Jewish and the Californian". Barney described his early life in Berkeley in a talk at the Roxburghe Club of San Francisco. It was published in *The Book Club of California Quarterly News-Letter* for Summer 2000 as "*An Enemy Alien in Berkeley: Reminiscences of the War Years by a Slightly Bemused Thirty-Niner*".<sup>4</sup>

Barney was born in Munich on May 5, 1920 to Erwin Rosenthal (1889–1981) and Margherita Olschki (1892–1979). The Rosenthals were a legendary and international family of booksellers, dealing at the highest level of the trade, and dating back three generations. His grandfather Jacques (1854–1937) and great-uncle Ludwig (1840–1928) were the leading German booksellers of their day. Barney's father was a skilled draughtsman, with a doctorate in art history who traded as L'Art Ancien in Zürich, specializing in illustrated incunabula and Old Master prints. Erwin had married the daughter of the greatest Italian antiquarian of his day, Leo S. Olschki (1861–1940)—the book shop is gone but the publishing arm survives to this day as the closest thing in Italy to the Anglo-American concept of the university press. This fortunate dynastic marriage produced two daughters and three bookseller sons, known amongst themselves by initial letter R and a numerical subscript. Barney was the youngest: R<sub>5</sub>. His



brother Albi (1914–2004), the world’s preeminent dealer in antiquarian music books and manuscripts for over fifty years, trading from Oxford and London, was R<sub>2</sub>. Felix (1917–2009), an architect in San Francisco and Marin County, who stepped in to run L’Art Ancien in Erwin’s old age, was R<sub>4</sub>.

It is just possible to be born a Rosenthal and not become a bookseller—Barney’s nephew Jim, the British sportscaster, is a celebrated example of the contrarian spirit. But the escape hatch is difficult to find. Fortunately the Rosenthal family had an exit strategy from Hitler in 1933 (via Italy) and then from Mussolini in 1938. Barney’s route was via Paris and then New York. Barely a month after arrival, he moved on to Berkeley—an Italian friend of his had “made it sound as though there was no other university anywhere.” Warned by his father that all the good books were gone, he majored in chemistry and considered becoming a farmer, no doubt a “scientific farmer,” expert in the best artificial fertilizers. His first appearance in print in America (after three years in the U. S. Army) was a series of abstracts contributed to the *Encyclopedia of Chemical Reactions*. But the lure of the book-trade was too strong and Barney quickly surrendered to the inevitable. He served an apprenticeship under his father while studying palaeography in Zürich, before returning to America for a job with the Parke-Bernet firm of auctioneers in New York (1951–3). Appropriately, the first book he catalogued for them was a pair of fifteenth century editions of Bernard of Clairvaux.

After one of the auctioneer’s annual purges—last in, first out!—he ventured out on his own. From 1953 to 1970 he had an office in New York City, specializing in early printed books and text manuscripts, and benefitting from the European connections of the family. One advantage of being a Rosenthal was the long line of supply, stretching back more than a century. After his father’s death, when Barney sold old family stock to the Getty, its legal staff—once bitten, twice shy!—insisted that the librarians enquire about source and clear title. Barney retorted in four words—“*La provenance c’est moi!*”—and they slunk away, tails between their legs. Albi would send over from Oxford any medieval manuscript that he failed to sell within six months, Rosenthal cousins in Holland (heirs of Ludwig) supplied bibliographical works, incunable leaves, and scraps of Anglo-Saxon manuscript, while Erwin (long based in Berkeley and running the Swiss business in absentia) consigned such treasures as the 1476 Venetian Bible annotated by Savonarola, discovered in 1957—so much for being too late at the feast!

Erwin also supplied a tiny scrap of vellum no larger than a postage stamp, on which were written a few words of the Gospel of St. John in Greek uncials of the third century. He had bought it for thirty-one dollars in 1949 from Erik von Scherling to give to Barney so that he would have something to discourage the many visitors who came to his New York office, hoping to sell their treasured family Bible for a small fortune. Barney would show it to them, framed on his wall, pointing out that here was something vastly older than the volume they had brought in, and far more important—and yet it was commercially worthless. But time caught up with him, and there came a point when he could no longer claim it had no value. BMR MS 119,



alas, had lost its function. As “BY FAR THE OLDEST MANUSCRIPT OF ANY OF THE GOSPELS IN PRIVATE HANDS OR EVER LIKELY TO BE SOLD”, it fetched £42,000 at Sotheby’s in 1990.

From L’Art Ancien in 1966, Barney also obtained his “first truly qualified employee”, Ruth Schwab. He married her in 1969 and they transferred the business to the Bay Area, with a shop on Post Street in San Francisco, and (by 1974) a house in Berkeley across the street from where Richard Diebenkorn had lived (1955-66) and painted many a numbered Berkeley scene. In a leisurely series of contractions, beginning in 1988, Barney reduced his scale to an office building near home on Telegraph Avenue and then to a tiny room near the Claremont BART station, with space for not much more than a couch—it had been designed for psychiatric practice but was perfectly proportioned for an elderly bookseller with a tiny stock.

It was only a year or two ago that he actually “retired”—if a bookseller can ever be said to retire. When Barney first broached the subject in his early seventies, Albi told him “Nonsense, Barney! You’re too old to retire!” His last two moves were made possible only by the sale of his large reference library, which filled at least ten times the space of his stock. Barney would often say (with the smile, perhaps of truth) that the book business existed to support the reference library. He attributed his fit and agile old age not just to a lifelong love of hiking in the mountains but to the strategic positioning of his bookcases and office furniture. Nothing was at arm’s length. This arrangement required Barney to cross the room dozens if not hundreds of times a day to consult a reference book for the redaction of a catalogue entry. *The Oxford Latin Dictionary*, in constant use, was kept far from his desk, on a handsome free-standing lectern—Barney was a great believer in upright learning.

A small stock, in turn, allowed him time for patient examination and interesting discoveries in almost every old book he touched. His masterpiece in this vein was to have been his *Catalogue 34*, listing 242 editions, chiefly before 1600, with marginal notes by contemporary readers. He had been setting them aside for years. Yale, however, bought the books before publication, and published the catalogue as *The Rosenthal Collection of Printed Books with Manuscript Annotations* (1997). A small income, in turn, dictated that he would attract little professional envy from his colleagues. Barney dealt in medieval text manuscripts, with few if any pretty pictures, leaving the glitz of illumination to others—to dealers who might be richer, but less content.

Not all of Barney’s publications were commercial. Three delightful if slender volumes on the book-trade mingled the personal with the historical: *Cartel, Clan or Dynasty? The Olschkis and the Rosenthals* (1977), *The Gentle Invasion: Continental Emigré Booksellers of the Thirties and Forties and their Impact on the Antiquarian Booktrade in the United States* (1987), and his own *Autobiography and Autobiography* (2010).

Barney had a sunny temperament, on principle, and a smile for all that radiated an understated sense of joie de vivre. He realized that he was fortunate to have been born a Rosenthal. He also had a rare genius for friendship—for gallantry—with humans as well as cats. It was a reticent and elusive friendship perhaps, with behavioral elements



of the gypsy and the will o' the wisp, for he could seduce by keeping his distance. Barney was a master of what the Italians call *cordialità protettiva*—protective cordiality. He was happy to see you come, and not always reluctant to see you go. His method of not suffering fools gladly was to avoid their company. He was an appreciative guest and reader, who never felt that his own worth was diminished (or the hierarchies of the cosmos distorted or overturned) by self-deprecation or praise of his inferiors. Barney was not one of those who tell you everything on the first date, but a more mysterious and enigmatic creature.

But though his charm was indefinable, and perhaps ever-changing and constantly re-formulated, as he disclosed (but only for a moment) another aspect of his personality, his fellow booksellers were drawn to it like moths to a flame. He was accessible to all, hail fellow well met around the world,<sup>1</sup> especially to the learned, but also to the ignorant, for his was an unpretentious charm. How could one be intimidated by a man, so obviously learned, who seasoned his conversation with the émigré and army vernacular of the 1940s—with such words as “creep” or “lousy” or “goofy”? As one of the last polyglots in the American book trade, he might raise an eyebrow at a solecism in your French or Latin (our rare book catalogues abound in such things) or some character flaw in a colleague, but he would then shrug his shoulders, and say, “Well, after all, at least we have books in common.” No bookseller more perfectly embodied the spirit of the motto *Amor librorum nos unit*—A love of books unites us. *Bene Vale*.

#### NOTES

- 1 A little more than half of this memorial notice was published as an obituary in the *San Francisco Chronicle* for 22nd January 2017. That version is available (with a portrait) on their website, as also on the ILAB website.
- 2 As “‘Trading with the Enemy’: Letters between Leo S. Olschki and Aby Warburg, October-December 1915” it will appear in *The Book Collector* later this year.
- 3 *Oh, America* (Palermo, Sellerio, 1996), pp. 110 & 118.
- 4 Barney’s only other appearance in the *Quarterly News-Letter* was an introduction of William P. Barlow, Jr. in the issue for Summer, 1989.



## Book Review

### *Essays by an Old Country Priest: Monsignor Francis J. Weber*

Francis J. Weber, Los Angeles: Zamorano Club, 2016. 123 pages.

JOHN CRICHTON

The Zamorano Club of Los Angeles has recently published an appealing selection of the writings of Monsignor Francis J. Weber entitled *Essays by an Old Country Priest . . . Selected from Hoja Volante (1972-2010)*. Monsignor Weber is an accomplished and well-known bookman, a devoted priest and historian, and his contributions to bibliophilia in the Southern California have been legendary. The forty-five short essays cover a myriad of topics, all instructive. He writes about the early (first?) California printer José de la Rosa, the engraver Bernhardt Wall, Junipero Serra, Mrs. Doheny's collections, miniature books, miniature bookplates, and miniature telephone directories, John Henry Nash, Galileo, the centennial of Dawson's Book Shop, and more. Weber writes in an informal yet informed manner, and his essays are reminiscent of Oscar Lewis's essays in the Book Club's *Quarterly News-Letter*. Norman Clayton of the Classic Letterpress handsomely designed and printed the book in a numbered edition of 200 copies, a copy of which is now in the Book Club's Albert Sperisen Library.

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## Exhibition and Catalogue Review: Artists & Others

Paul van Capelleveen, *Artists & Others: the imaginative French book in the 21st century: Koopman Collection, National Library of the Netherlands*. Nijmegen, Vantilt Publisher, The Hague, 2016. 216 pp. ISBN 9789460042683

GERALD W. CLOUD

Last summer (June 1–July 30, 2016) the Grolier Club staged a brilliant exhibition of artists' books from the Koninklijke Bibliotheek, the National Library of the Netherlands's Koopman Collection, in the club's main gallery. The exhibition, *Artists & Others: The Imaginative French Book in the 21st Century*, was organized by Paul van Capelleveen, the curator of the Koopman collection, and featured seventy artists' books from his library's shelves. Van Capelleveen has published and lectured widely on the book arts, and he complemented the exhibition with two well-attended panel discussions, where book artists, collectors, curators, and others came together to discuss artists' books. The catalog, which bears the same title as the exhibition, provides an excellent introduction to the Koopman's ambitious collecting, and a rich reference guide to the contemporary artist's book in France.

The Koopman Collection is dedicated to French literary works from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries: first editions, dedication copies, specially designed books, and artists' books, thanks to a bequest from Louis Koopman (1887–1968), who left his books and an endowment for acquisitions to the library, in commemoration of his fiancée Anny Antoine (1897–1933) whose life was cut short in a traffic accident. The exhibition, and the wonderfully produced catalog associated with it, feature only works that were published in this century. The selections are French in origin—a designation extending quite liberally beyond the nationality of the artist, writer, printer, or publisher of the book, to the place of production, or the language of its textual content. The resulting catalog therefore includes French speaking artists from Switzerland, Belgium, and Canada, but also collaborative publishing (with some French content or participation) by American, British, German, Russian, and other artists and printers from non-French speaking countries who have established themselves in France. This broad and inclusive definition of “French” reflects the global nature of artist's book production and the fact that “French artists, just like artists elsewhere in the world no longer operate in isolation” (14).<sup>1</sup>

The catalog succeeds on many levels and readers will appreciate the wealth of well-illustrated descriptions of contemporary French books. With 120 entries the catalog nearly doubles the number of books displayed at the Grolier Club, making it an essential complement to the displays and programming associated with it. *Artists & Others'* discussion of these books, and artists' books in general, contributes to a greater understanding of the traditions of the artist's book and those who make them.

It begins with a history of the Koopman Collection and its evolution from a commemorative ensemble of books honoring its founder to a carefully curated collection



that respects Koopman's intentions and also intelligently models the library's collecting strategy. Librarians and curators take note: For those whose responsibility to build collections is based on broad, open-ended criteria, van Capelleveen's approach to collecting French books offers a solution. By interrogating the terminology used to describe the French artist's book—*livre illustré*, *livre de luxe*, *livre bibliophile*, *livre de peintre*, *livre d'artiste*, *livre-objet*, etc.—van Capelleveen concludes that such terms, which “were always retrospectively attached to various book forms by academics and critics,” are misleading (15). Instead of following blindly such terminology, the Koopman Collection has been developed and promoted interpretively, seeking to provide “insight into the choices that artists and printers have to make” when making books (14). Accordingly, the span of artists' books presented here covers the broad existing range of production methods and approaches, without subordination to pre-existing designations now *démodé*.

The catalog's introductory matter offers a thoughtfully arranged analysis of artists' books (in all their profusion) and contextualizes them in an intellectual and historical framework that can be profitably read alongside more comprehensive studies, such as *Artists' Books: The Book as Work of Art, 1963–2000*, by Stephen Bury, *The Century of Artists' Books*, by Johanna Drucker, and *Ésthetique du Livre d'Artiste, 1960–1980*, by Anne Moeglin-Delcroix. In this section van Capelleveen analyzes the arguments and definitions set out by Drucker and Moeglin-Delcroix, looking for any limitations in those oft-cited works, while also interpreting and responding to them. His approach is not polemical, allowing him to keep sight of his objective, which is to show how the imaginative French book has been most recently produced. Van Capelleveen deftly brings his reader into an analytical conversation about the artist's book, and the introductory section prepares us for the main section of the catalog where these twenty-first century books are described. The reader is not led to conclusions, but instead encouraged to ask questions: “How should these books created by artists be read?” and, in a paraphrase of Drucker, “how do these books do what they do?”

Van Capelleveen maintains this analytical approach by organizing the catalog into four categories: 1) printers working with artists; 2) artists/printers; 3) creative publishers; 4) artists & many others. These categories are useful, in that they keep the reader thinking about how the books came to be—who made them, how were they printed, what materials were used, etc.—and they encourage us to think about the role that given individuals have played in the creation of artists' books. The categories are broadly adaptable, perhaps to a fault, each containing a diversity of examples; the section on creative publishers features both huge houses and individual proprietors. Van Capelleveen does not take a position on the quality or value of a given publishing model, instead he reveals the various models that lead to the making and disseminating of these books.

Another of the catalog's virtues is that it provides an excellent reflection on the diversity of work that has taken place in France from 2000 up to the present, surveying the imaginative book in the twenty-first century. That a Dutch library organized



an exhibition of French books at an American bibliophilic society emphasizes that diversity, and indeed the inclusive nature, of the artist's book community today. The span of books and book makers included in the catalog ranges from single individuals who carry out nearly all the tasks of producing their books, like Anick Butré, to proper publishing houses, such as Fata Morgana who has issued more than fifteen-hundred titles over a period of fifty years. Another large publisher, Collectif Génération, is run by a single auteur, Gervais Jassaud, who collaborates broadly, but determines the format, typeface, and most of each book's design aspects. There are traditional artists like Jean Capdeville and Joel Leick who create unique *livres de peintre* and free agents like François Da Ros, Jean-Jacques Sargent, and Michael Caine, all of whom have their own larger operations, but also do work for hire for their fellow book artists. Among the foreign artists who have made France their base of operation, two private presses are included here, Kickshaws and Éditions Verdigris, both run by Anglo-American couples. La Zone Opaque represents the younger generation of book artists aiming at producing books without the stigma of bibliophilic tendencies; they are nonetheless highly trained (by Michael Caine at the École Estienne) and strive to maintain quality as well as originality in their collectively produced books. On the other side of the coin is the traditional work of Despalles Éditions, which produces carefully executed *livres d'artiste*, including its own edition of Pierre Reverdy's, *Le Chants des Mort*, in which Picasso's illustrations are replaced by those of Johannes Strugalla. The work of Pierre Walusinski is represented both by his own printing and that which he collaborated on and published under the auspices of Librairie Nicaise (the bookshop established in 1943 which recently reopened in Paris' sixteenth arrondissement). Like Walusinski, Didier Mutel also attended the École Estienne, where his career as an engraver and book artist began when he was still a teenager. Mutel, who holds the prestigious title of *Maître d'art* (one of four included in the catalog, namely, Michael Caine, François Da Ros, and Eric Seydoux), operates France's oldest engraving studio, established 1793, where he produces works realized from traditional etching, but also letterpress, photoengraving, and experimental work that combines twenty-first century digital technology with eighteenth century printing techniques. Mutel's work was granted the greatest amount of space in the Grolier Club exhibition, and the diversity of his work places him in many of the categories set out by van Capelleveen as indicative of the imaginative French book of the twenty-first century. Van Capelleveen emphasizes that his selections were not inspired by strict demarcations of artistic practice, "not so much exhaustive as representative. The stress is not on definitions but rather on observations" (17). As is evident in this brief summary of the participants in *Artists & Others*, one observes a field that is as rich as it is diverse.

One learns a great deal about the world of the artist's book by simply absorbing the biographical details and working methods of each artist featured here. Every printer, engraver, papermaker, publisher, and artist is introduced with an account of their training and experiences, as well as their accomplishments as book makers. Their history, their collaborations with other artists, and the context within which they produce their books is paired with a consistent emphasis on the material aspects



of the books they produce: the technical manner of their printing and production—whether letterpress, engraved, or offset—the type of paper, binding, and even the specific typefaces preferred all figure into the rich description of the books presented here. There are copious full-color illustrations, which have been reproduced in a manner that reveals the tactile aspect of the artist's book: paper texture and weight, typographical impression, the application of pigments, and the three-dimensional aspect of the works described here are all discernable. Bindings, slipcases, and the scale of these books are also taken into consideration and are presented with as much fidelity to the actual books as photographic reproduction can offer.



The catalog suffers from one or two shortcomings. Most distressing for this reviewer was the lack of captions for the wonderful images and a discrete bibliography of the works represented. In most cases the lack of captions does not prevent the reader from figuring out which works are depicted, but more explicit labels would have been useful. An appropriate comparison can be seen in the layout for Moeglin-Delcroix's *Ésthetique du Livre d'Artiste*, which is approximately the same format and size, but which includes unobtrusive captions. The catalog sets the bar very high in its intellectual and interpretative efforts but one does long for a more concrete bibliography. Although van Capelleveen makes it clear that the catalog is not intended to identify the most exemplary or "canonical" works (this is not the *Zamarano 80* for French artists' books), a more formal list would serve as a handy reference for collectors and curators. In the author's defense, an extensive bibliography of reference works cited or consulted in the preparation of the catalog is included, which offers the reader insight into current scholarship and secondary writings on the artist's book, especially in France, the US, and the Netherlands.

One final service that the catalog provides is that it gives us a place to start our understanding of the contemporary French artist's book. The success of the CODEX Book Fair, which has grown continually since its inception in 2007, has brought the international world of book artists firmly to our shores; the increased interest by libraries, curators, collectors, and scholars has fed a renewed fascination with the book as physical artifact and as work of art. Choices of artists' books are increasing, more work and better work is being produced, but most of us have not seen reciprocal growth in our acquisitions funds. We can only applaud van Capelleveen, and others who produce exhibitions, programs, lectures, and catalogs that interpret and promote the book arts and offer us tools and methodologies toward the interpretation of these expanding choices. The catalog is available from the Grolier Club or from the publisher Vantilt's website, and is well worth the \$30/€30 price.

#### NOTES

- I All quotations are from the catalog *Artists & Others*.



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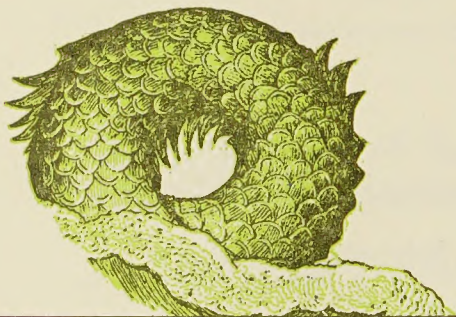
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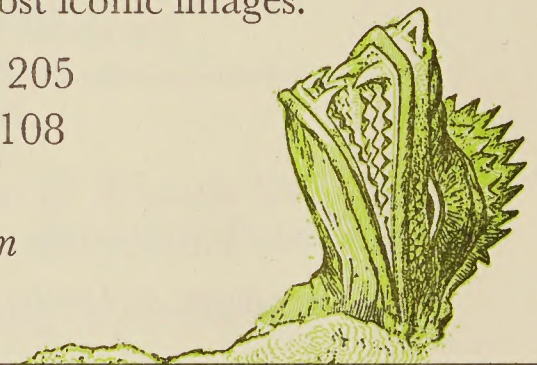
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